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transition *in*
**Early
Childhood**

A report from the Division of Early Childhood Development

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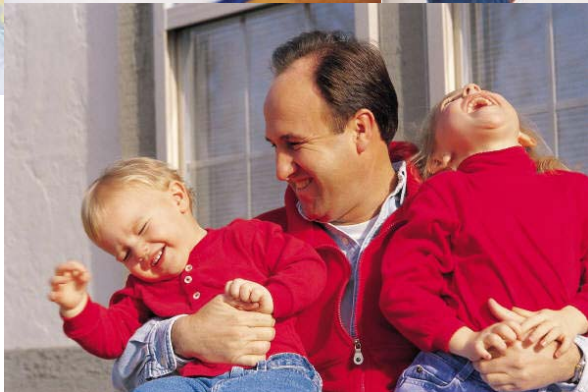
The Kentucky Department of Education by the Transition Work Group.
Katherine McCormick, Brenda Mullins, Kim Townley, Editors

VISION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION

Young children in Kentucky, prenatal to six years old, and their families, experience successful and supported movement among environments.

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide recommendations that will lead to the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a comprehensive state transition plan to improve continuity of services for children, prenatal to six years, and their families.



RATIONALE FOR COMPREHENSIVE TRANSITION PLANNING

The Kentucky's KIDS NOW goal that "all children in Kentucky are healthy and safe, possess the foundation that will enable school and personal success, and live in strong families that are supported and strengthened within their communities", requires planning and action on the part of state agencies and the early childhood community. More than twenty efforts to improve the lives of young children and their families are now under way as a part of this planning (KIDS NOW, 2001).

Transition into, out of, and between early childhood programs is a natural result of maturation and participation in KIDS NOW early childhood component parts. Planning for transitions is important for every Kentucky family with young children. It may be the transition of a newborn from the hospital to home or the transition of a preschooler to kindergarten. Each are pivotal and important times in a child's development. For families, these transitions provide opportunities to meet other families and community members as they access community early childhood programs, Head Start, preschool, and primary.

Children and families experience a range of changes throughout the early years, which may require specific resources and supports. *This report and the recommendations that are included address the need for transition planning at three levels - state, community, and family.* The intent of this report is to lay the groundwork for addressing the transition needs of young children through recommendations that address:

- ♦ preparing children for transition;
- ♦ supporting families;
- ♦ building communication and collaboration;
- ♦ expanding training;
- ♦ establishing regulations and policies; and
- ♦ implementing evaluation and quality assurance activities.

It is believed that these recommendations will result in the following outcomes for young children and their families:

- ♦ greater public and professional awareness of the need for transition planning;
- ♦ establishment of transition supports and resources;
- ♦ guided development of state policy related to transition;
- ♦ increased recognition of recommended practices in transition;
- ♦ increased family involvement in the transition process; and
- ♦ increased number of successful transitions for children and their families.

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SUPPORTING RESEARCH

Transition is a lifelong and continuous process. Transitions typically signify change – a child’s first step, first haircut, first day at child care, preschool, or primary. Most families plan for big transitions in a child’s life, such as coming home from the hospital or moving from preschool to primary. However, families may not always plan for the transitions that occur in between - when children move from one preschool program to another or from family care to group care. When planning is effective, success at each of these transitions is more likely, the process is smooth and children, and families move easily from one program to the next.

Transition planning addresses current trends in society and education.

There are several trends that support the need for more attention to planning transition for young children and their families. First, the American family is increasingly diverse with a variety of accompanying needs. Second, interdisciplinary research has acknowledged the critical importance of development during the early years and its pivotal role in later academic and social behavior. Third, the availability of public schooling for many 3 and 4-year-olds has changed the nature of transition to school.

Transition planning is consistent with the national goals of school readiness.

The importance of a child’s experiences during the early childhood years and the direct impact these early experiences have on later success in school and life has been acknowledged by both public and professional communities (Good Start, Grow Smart, 2002; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003). In his State of the Union Address (January 2002), President Bush described the critical need for education reform to prepare children for success in school and launched a federal initiative titled Good Start, Grow Smart to support state and local community efforts to strengthen early learning for young children. National data suggest that while 38% of young children in America receive care solely from their parents; 62% receive care from a variety of caregivers including non-parental relatives, non-relatives, and center-based programs. Therefore, the quality of these early care and education settings and the experiences of young children within these environments is critically important to the nation’s future.

The National Education Goals Panel (1998) outlined 10 keys to ready schools. Three of these specifically relate to transition:

- ♦ ready schools smooth the transition between homes and schools;
- ♦ ready schools strive for continuity between early care and education programs and elementary schools; and
- ♦ ready schools serve children in the communities.

The Panel further stated that “all children can benefit from being supported through the transition to school, even though many children make this adjustment successfully” (p. 4).

Transition planning is required for targeted populations.

Congress recognized the complexities inherent in both the lives of children with disabilities and their families (34 CFR 303.147) and the lives of children and families from low income environments (45 CFR 1304.41 (c)). As a result, they mandated transition planning as a part of the services provided for these vulnerable populations. Families of children with disabilities are often not prepared to navigate a system of multiple disciplines, funding sources, agencies and program approaches. Movements between and among these agencies may require guidance and coordination within the system. Families with low incomes can be at additional risk during the transition process. In fact, a national survey of 3,600 kindergarten teachers found that teachers in urban, high poverty, and high minority areas report the greatest challenges to successful transition (Pianta, Cox, Taylor & Early, 1999).

Transition planning addresses school readiness.

Early childhood educators have come to the understanding that school readiness is not just about children being ready for school but that schools must be ready for children, with strategies to promote learning for each child (National Governor’s Association, 2005, Building the Foundation for Bright Futures). Creating a caring community of learners and promoting a positive and developmentally appropriate environment for learning is critical to the successful transition of children. The importance of transition planning has been addressed by early childhood experts. Two of their statements are included below.

Program staff should begin the transition process by creating a caring community of learners and promoting a positive climate for learning. This includes not only attending to the specific instructional techniques we use to facilitate learning, but also attending to the environment in which we offer these services. Providing a climate of mutual respect allows for positive teacher/child interactions, including ensuring that staff provide motivation for learning and social skill development and use positive guidance in acquisition of skills (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Recognizing that transition to elementary school is inevitable and that it maybe a critical event for families, child care centers should engage in specific practices to help children adjust to the transition (e.g., visiting an elementary school, going on joint field trips with early elementary classes). Likewise, child care programs should assist families in understanding the kindergarten registration process used in their communities. Similarly, the public schools can communicate with community child care programs about the transition process and about the nature of the early elementary curriculum (Wolery, 1999, p. 256).

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Transition planning is a process.

One of the most critical factors affecting transitions in early childhood is the way in which families, teachers and administrators view transition planning. When transition is viewed as a specific event that children and families go through, the transition is often disjointed and ineffective. On the other hand, when transition is viewed as a life-long process, the transition experience is much more meaningful and successful for families, teachers, and administrators. Thinking of transition as a process means that there is collaboration between preschools, elementary schools and others in the community to design a set of activities that are congruent across programs (Rous, 2000 p. 3).

Transition planning works.

Intentional and thoughtful transition planning promotes effective transition for children, families, and professionals (Ramey & Ramey, 1999, Rosenkoetter, Hains, & Fowler 1994). Findings from a national study of transition at kindergarten (Pianta, Cox, Taylor & Early, 1999) suggest that successful transitions can be facilitated by the use of 5 core elements of planning.

- 1) Relationships among families and professionals must be fostered and considered as vital resources before, during, and after transition.**
- 2) The greater the continuity across programs, curricula, and personnel; the greater likelihood for successful transition.**
- 3) Family strength must be a focus.**
- 4) Transition practices are tailored to individual child and family needs in successful transition.**
- 5) Collaborative relationships are fostered in successful transitions.**

Furthermore, it is recommended that these practices be accompanied by state and local mandates for transition planning and state and local practices to support successful transitions. Such mandates may include strategies such as forming collaborative teams to plan, implement, and evaluate a community transition plan; the identification of a transition coordinator for schools or programs; and the development of timelines and evaluation procedures (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003).

“One of the few universals of childhood is the transition to school. As each child crosses the threshold of the school, he or she embarks on a remarkable course of learning, accompanied inevitably by successes, failures, friends made and lost, and interests turned on and off. Make no mistake, school is the real world for children and what happens there matters – now and forever” (Ramey & Ramey, 1999, p. 217).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are presented in six categories: Preparing Children, Supporting Families, Building Collaboration, Expanding Training, Implementing Regulations & Policies, and Ensuring Program Evaluation and Quality Assurance. The recommendations span all levels of the system, including state, community, and family.

Preparing Children

Transition is a visible and inevitable marker that children are growing up and going out to meet new people and new challenges. During transitions, children and their families meet new people in new environments and adjust to new schedules, routines, and expectations. Successfully meeting these challenges requires thoughtful planning. Careful planning can help families and children reduce stress and adjust successfully to new environments and challenges.

OUTCOME: CHILDREN ARE PREPARED FOR TRANSITION AND EXPERIENCE LITTLE DISRUPTION TO LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT.

STRATEGIES:

1. CHILDREN ARE PREPARED FOR TRANSITION.

- ♦ Children participate in a variety of activities that allow them to learn about a new environment (e.g. visit the next environment - preschool, primary, elementary school)
- ♦ Families and professionals provide support and instruction to help the child acquire behaviors necessary to be successful in the next environment.
- ♦ Families and professionals utilize resources (Building a Strong Foundation for School Success: KY Early Childhood Standards, KY Early Childhood Continuous Assessment Guide) to assure success for all children.

In some ways, life (especially school) is about transition. We prepare ourselves and our children to be successful in the next environment. Early care and education experiences provide opportunities to practice behaviors necessary to be successful in primary. Primary prepares children for success in the upper elementary program. High school prepares students for success in work or college. Therefore, school curricula are based on what skills/behavior should be acquired or taught to facilitate this success. The same is true for early learning and development. Families and professionals take time to help children acquire the behaviors necessary for success in the next environment. By visiting the next program, families and professional are aware of the behaviors necessary for success in the new environment and can help children acquire and practice these before they move.

2. PROFESSIONALS RESPOND POSITIVELY TO THE INDIVIDUALITY OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES.

- ♦ Professionals are aware of the requirements of the next environment.
- ♦ Professionals are aware of unique and individual characteristics of children, families , and communities.

3. FAMILIES AND PROFESSIONALS SHARE WITH CHILDREN THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE NEXT ENVIRONMENT.

- ♦ Programs utilize the Building a Strong Foundation for School Success: KY Early Childhood Quality Self Study document to assure continuity throughout program implementation with children.

4. CHILDREN, ESPECIALLY THOSE WITH DISABILITIES OR AT-RISK, ARE PROVIDED WITH SUPPORT SKILLS NECESSARY FOR SUCCESS IN THE NEXT ENVIRONMENT.

- ♦ Advance universal and individual planning is conducted.
- ♦ Transition skills instruction or intervention is provided when appropriate.

Recent research has indicated that there is often a “poor fit” between the skills of kindergartners and expectations of their teachers (Pianta, Cox, Taylor & Early, 1999). Early care and education providers must therefore engage in specific and systematic practices that help children prepare for transition. Examples may include carrying a tray at lunch, or moving from activity to activity in a line.

5. AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS ENSURE PROGRAM CONTINUITY THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND GUIDANCE PRACTICES.

- ♦ Programs participate in STARS for KIDS NOW Quality Rating System and seek accreditation.
- ♦ Programs employ classroom staff who have at least the Commonwealth Child Care Credential.
- ♦ Programs facilitate the professional growth of staff using available scholarship programs and other supports.
- ♦ Programs utilize the Building a Strong Foundation for School Success: KY Early Childhood Standards, the KY Early Childhood Continuous Assessment Guide, and participate in the Self Study process using the KY Early Childhood Quality Self Study document.

Transitions can be most easily facilitated if programs share common practices, which are developmentally and individually appropriate for young children. Continuity of curriculum, instruction, and guidance will facilitate children’s movement between these environments. This continuity can be achieved through a variety of strategies and activities.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Effective transition planning involves families. The literature is clear on the importance of involving families early and often in transition planning. Families are partners and primary decision makers in their child's early care and education.

Effective transition planning is flexible and responsive to the individual concerns of each family (Rosenkoeter, Hains & Fowler, 1994). All families need information that is readily available, clear and relevant, so they will be better informed and more involved in the transition process. Public awareness is a key component to success.

OUTCOME: FAMILIES ARE SUPPORTED DURING THE TRANSITION PROCESS.

STRATEGIES:

1. Families and professionals work together to strengthen family social supports.
2. Families and professionals communicate frequently and in ways that are individualized to facilitate family involvement and understanding.

Previous transition research suggests that families can best be supported when professionals view family members as “resources with special strengths” and build relationships keeping in mind these special strengths (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003). Frequent collaborations and communications help families and professionals to individualize transition practices to maximize the success of these practices. In turn, a variety of practices must be offered and flexibly designed to be applied across a wide range of needs and strengths and tailored to meet individual needs (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003).

OUTCOME: FAMILIES ARE INVOLVED EARLY AND OFTEN IN TRANSITION ACTIVITIES.

STRATEGIES:

1. The opinions and expectations of families are respected and acted upon in planning transition.
2. Families and professionals meet frequently to plan for the child's transition.
3. Professionals use existing bonds to facilitate transitions for children and families.
4. Families facilitate transition through activities suggested in the Parent Guides for Building a Strong Foundation for School Success, though reading or other literacy activities with a high likelihood of promoting school success.
5. Families and children visit the next environment and participate in other transition planning activities.

Family involvement is critical to successful transition. Professionals can support family involvement by helping families use existing friendships and collaborations in transition. For example, siblings may be placed with the same teacher; preschool friends or car pool buddies may be assigned to the same school and/or teacher. These small but significant strategies to support existing bonds and friendships support transition and family involvement.

OUTCOME: FAMILIES HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF TRANSITION PLANNING.

STRATEGIES:

1. Provide material related to transition at all points of contact with the service system.

There are multiple early care and education agencies and programs that interact with families throughout the early years including birthing hospitals, physicians/ medical care centers, and early care and education providers.

2. Establish a universally accessible information system on the topic of transition planning.

- ♦ Establish a directory and online system of available services that provides transition information and links to transition resources, state, regional and local resources.
- ♦ Provide transition links on major web sites across the state, e.g. Kentucky Department of Education; Head Start; Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs; and KY Direct.
- ♦ Conduct a statewide public awareness campaign emphasizing the importance of transition planning.
- ♦ Distribute to partners, written information on transition to be included in existing packet of material families receive as they leave the hospital with a newborn.

3. Ensure that transition information developed by federal and state agencies is easily understood by all families and addresses cultural and ethnic diversity.

- ♦ Collaborating partners share transition materials that can then be shared with families.
- ♦ Programs budget and plan for materials that are easily understood by a diversity of families.

4. Ensure that all state and local community agencies responsible for the care of young children develop material in a coordinated, consistent way with other agencies.

- ♦ Programs incorporate the topic of transition in existing information.
- ♦ Programs distribute materials about effective transition to stakeholders.

Local agencies that have face-to-face contact with families daily have an excellent opportunity to convey information, interpret the information, and generally communicate with families about the relevant issues surrounding transition. Some examples of these agencies are public health offices, early childhood programs, and elementary schools.

Building Communication and Collaboration

Transition planning requires communication and collaboration. Transition between and among agencies within a community can be facilitated by a community wide agreement between multiple agencies. An interagency agreement provides communities with a clear and written plan that can help to facilitate a family and child's transition from program to program. Transition planning must involve all community agencies. Ross-Allen & Conn Powers (1991) describes the process as "a collaborative effort among a number of individuals (i. e., the child's family, early childhood special educators, kindergarten teachers, other special and regular education staff, district special education administrators, the building principal, preschool or day-care teachers, paraprofessionals, and other relevant individuals). Each individual brings a unique perspective and invaluable expertise to the planning process and can contribute to the success of the child's transition" (p. 12).

Communication between school and families is one of the most common and successful ways to support positive transitions for young children. The National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL) Transition Project reported the three most common strategies were simply, 1) talking with a child's parents after school starts, 2) a letter sent to the child's parents after school starts, and 3) open house for parents after school starts. Transitions can be further enhanced if these activities occur before and during transition and are individualized to child and family need.

Planned transition procedures support collaboration among community agencies and allow them to work together to: address each family's needs; provide a smooth transition when the child moves to another program or agency; utilize the service provider's expertise to meet an array of individual needs; and coordinate child assessments and other procedures to eliminate duplication (Bridging Early Services Transition Task Force, p. 1, 1995).

OUTCOME: EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTS ARE DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE.

STRATEGIES:

1. Provide joint training to staff across multiple programs that aligns with the Kentucky Early Childhood Core Content and the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards.
2. Programs adopt and implement the Building a Strong Foundation for School Success: KY Early Childhood Quality Self Study, KY Early Childhood Standards, and the KY Early Childhood Continuous Assessment Guide.
3. Programs facilitate cross program visitation.
4. Programs ensure frequent and ongoing communication with other childhood programs.

Findings from the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL) Kindergarten Transition Project suggest that a number of discontinuities between preschool and kindergarten practices currently exist and are barriers to successful transitions for young children. These may include: a mismatch of curriculum (typically a more academic-based program at kindergarten), a more complex social environment than young children have previously experienced, less parental support, less connections for/with families, and less time with their teacher. Strategies such as joint training and cross program visits may lessen or ameliorate the impact of these barriers and provide opportunities for professionals to exchange information about expectations and experiences for children so that these can be made more consistent (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003).

OUTCOME: PROGRAMS AND AGENCIES SERVING YOUNG CHILDREN WORK COLLABORATIVELY TO SUPPORT THE TRANSITION PROCESS.

STRATEGIES:

1. Develop, sign and implement interagency agreements between and among agencies serving children birth to age six. Agreements include both those required by federal and state regulations and those who voluntarily enter into agreements for program coordination to establish how transitions for children will be strengthened by each party in the agreement.
 - ♦ Agreement components include five steps: 1) Strategies for Community Collaboration; 2) Enriching Family Interaction; 3) Child Preparation; 4) Collaboration with Community Partners (Policies and Procedures) and 5) On-going Review.

When teachers in the NCEDL study were asked to identify the major barriers to successful transitions for young children, one of the most frequently cited barriers was a lack of a transition practice plan for the school or district. Agreements which are developed with the involvement of key partners in the community, including families, are more likely to address relevant needs, be more widely publicized, and lead to higher levels of accountability.

The interagency agreement can be a catalyst for cooperation and provide mechanisms for communication. An element of planning is required to develop the agreement and this can lead to a continuous planning process between and among agencies. Essential membership includes representatives from the following:

- ♦ Public Health Department offices: WIC, Immunization, Family Planning, and Prenatal Clinics, Healthy Start in Child Care Consultants
 - ♦ Community Based Services (CBS) offices: Medicaid intake, Food Stamp intake, and Community Based Services intake, Child Care Resource & Referral agencies
 - ♦ Early Childhood Center-Based Settings: Head Start, regulated child care programs and family child care homes
 - ♦ Early childhood home based services: First Steps, and HANDS Home Visiting
 - ♦ Local Education Agencies (schools), Family Resource and Youth Services Center, Preschool Coordinators, Special Education Coordinators
 - ♦ Families
2. Agencies responsible for the implementation of agreements provide the necessary resources to staff, and sufficient information and support to families, to fulfill the intent of the agreements.
 3. Programs commit adequate resources to successful transition planning and implementation.
 4. Programs access existing resources to provide support and technical assistance as needed (Child Care Resource & Referral agencies, Regional Training Centers, Head Start Training and Resources Specialists, First Steps Technical Assistance Teams).

The development of interagency agreements requires time, effort, and commitment by agency representatives. Implementation of an interagency agreement requires staff time. Often, however, release time is not available or agency service coordinators are too busy to meet and other supports are unavailable. In order for the agreements to work, it is essential that necessary staff resources be provided.

Expanding Training

Training efforts are critical in promoting continuity of services, building relationships among staff and families, and helping to define specific transition activities (Jang & Mangione, 1994; Rous, Schuster & Hemmeter, 1999). Training opportunities scheduled to ensure convenience and accessibility for participants are essential for success. Programs must work to find ways to share the financial and logistical responsibilities for these training experiences (Swan & Morgan, 1993).

OUTCOME: WHEN TRANSITIONS OCCUR, PERSONS INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS UNDERSTAND AND USE RECOMMENDED PRACTICES.

STRATEGIES:

1. **Research based, best practices related to transitions are included as part of the curriculum in pre-service programs for disciplines involved in the care and education of children, birth to age six, and their families.**
 - ♦ Embed and integrate content on transition into classroom activities and lectures in addition to field experience conducted by institutes of higher education for all professionals working with young children.
 - ♦ Provided information related to transition in training for key administrators (i.e., Superintendents, Principals, Child Care Directors, Head Start Directors, Special Education Directors).

The topic of transition needs to be introduced early in a professional's training and be incorporated across all levels of training (e.g., orientation, CDA, AA, BA). A key component of this training would be related to partnership development with families, and multiple agencies.

2. **Research based , best practices related to transitions are included as part of the curriculum for in-service programs and conferences/institutes.**
3. **In development of in-services training all entities use the KY Early Childhood Professional Development Core Content and the KY Early Childhood Standards.**
4. **Early Childhood Credentialed trainers provide in-service training.**
5. **Information and materials related to early childhood transitions are included in the Family Resource/Youth Services Centers (FRYSC) new coordinator orientation training.**
6. **Training entities such as Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies, Regional Training Centers, and First Steps Technical Assistance Teams provide regular training on transition best practices.**
7. **Develop and offer a web-based course on transition available for all professionals in the field.**
8. **Included information on early childhood transition in the Foster Care Training provided by Community Based Services.**

Establishing Regulations & Policies

In order to achieve success, programs must work collaboratively on the establishment and implementation of transition policies and procedures that cross programs (Pianta, Cox, Taylor & Early, 1999). Policies may include the development of processes which support shared leadership, training, decision-making, and program evaluation. These transition methods include procedures to identify tasks, timelines, and responsibilities that help staff plan for transition and that are agreed upon by administrative and teaching staff within and between agencies. This will reduce traditional barriers to planning and collaboration such as disagreement about policy implementation and responsibilities, duplication of services, and lack of knowledge of other parts of the system (Rice & O'Brien, 1990).

OUTCOME: AGENCIES FOLLOW POLICIES AND PROCEDURES THAT SUPPORT EFFECTIVE TRANSITIONS.

STRATEGIES:

1. **Review and revise as needed, existing regulations within agencies, to address transitions and ensure that appropriate administrative policies and supports are in place to increase the expectations toward recommended practices.**

Regulations and policies establish the parameters of practice within agencies. While there may be a need to strengthen these policies to support effective transitions, flexibility is important in order to follow recommended practices.

2. **Programs and schools develop annual transition plans that address interagency collaborative activities, staff training, family support, and child preparation and adjustment activities.**
3. **Transition Planning components include: 1) Organizational Structure; 2) Community Planning Process; 3) Written Plan Completion; 4) Implementation; 5) Follow-up (Review, Revise, Report).**

In many agencies, transition planning is required and generally, policies and procedures exist. However, there are agencies and settings that greatly influence the transition process for children and families, but do not address transition in their policies and procedures. Essential team contacts from agencies are identified, and extended membership and alternative ways of involvement are encouraged at the beginning of the planning process.

Implementing Evaluation & Quality Assurance

Evaluation of transition efforts at the state, local and family level is critical if transition efforts are to be successful. Administrative leadership is necessary for systematic evaluation efforts to occur and for the results of the evaluation activities to be used to improve transition practices at the local level.

OUTCOME: FAMILIES HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE FORMAL FEEDBACK ABOUT TRANSITION AS A PART OF PROGRAM EVALUATION.

STRATEGIES:

1. Programs regularly survey families to determine effectiveness of transitions and to guide revisions in the process.

Surveys can be administered at each point of transition, within sufficient time after the transition to allow families to accurately capture their experiences.

2. Early Childhood agencies and program providers show evidence of responding to family concerns and complaints related to transition.

Transition planning must include a mechanism for evaluation and revision based on family concerns and feedback. In addition, early childhood agencies and providers must also employ strategies for the timely response to concerns and complaints expressed by families related to transition.

OUTCOME: INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE TO STAKEHOLDERS THAT DEMONSTRATES HOW TRANSITION PRACTICES ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED, AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS.

STRATEGIES:

1. Agencies document their training on transitions through signatures of participants, including families, with identifying information such as geographic area, titles, Parts B or C, etc., and compile and analyze data.
2. Community Early Childhood Councils take the lead on a community-based needs assessment by surveying all relevant parties (including families) to determine current knowledge of transition and available resources to support transitions.
3. Agencies assess family satisfaction and adherence to timelines as a part of follow-up to transition.

These strategies make visible the commitment of the agencies and staff in promoting successful transition for children and families. The outcomes of a community-based needs assessment provide community leaders with information critical for resource allocation and policy making.

OUTCOME: TRANSITION REQUIREMENTS AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL ARE ENFORCED FOR TARGETED POPULATIONS.

STRATEGY:

1. Support state efforts for monitoring and reporting for Part B and Part C.

State and local authorities engage in self-evaluation and improvement planning. This includes a comprehensive review of policies and their implementation, and requires improvement planning. As part of this review, provider and parent groups are convened to provide feedback and to express concerns and/or praise.

OUTCOME: PROGRAM EVALUATION INCLUDES REAL-LIFE COMPONENTS.

EXAMPLE RESULTS COULD INCLUDE:

- ♦ Children like school and look forward to going to school regularly;
- ♦ Children show steady growth in academic skills;
- ♦ Parents become actively involved in their children's education – at home, in school, and in the community;
- ♦ Classroom environments are emotionally positive ones for both teachers and children;
- ♦ Teachers and families value each other;
- ♦ Schools celebrate the cultural diversity in their communities and in the nation as a whole;
- ♦ Developmentally appropriate practices are visible in classrooms; and
- ♦ The community shows consistent investment in the education of children and strives to increase the learning opportunities available.

These outcomes are the visible evidence of the success of transition planning and practices in the community.

CONNECTIONS & CONCLUSIONS

All children experience transition. In order for this to occur, it often means that families will need to be guided and supported. Local communities must be organized around the idea of continuity, and state systems must be flexible and supportive. **Transition** is a part of life. Children and families can be supported through early childhood transition in multiple ways. The following underlying assumptions must be considered if transitions are to be successful for young children and their families in Kentucky:

- ♦ **Survival resources** are adequate to meet the child's and family's needs;
- ♦ **Good physical and mental health and health practices** prevail;
- ♦ Individuals have a **sense of security**;
- ♦ Child and family have a **positive and realistic self concept**;
- ♦ **Positive motivation, expectations, and values exist to do well in school**;
- ♦ Individuals have **good social support** to facilitate the transition;
- ♦ Child and family have **good communication** both among themselves and with those concerned with the transition to school; and
- ♦ Child and family have those **basic skills** considered essential to do well, such as everyday living, social-emotional, school and academic, and job-related (Ramey & Ramey, 1999).

Research has shown that effective transition planning is a process that requires continuous attention at the state, local and family level and no one effort at planning can meet the on-going needs. This report has described the efforts in Kentucky to address the transition needs of young children over the last fifteen years, including the most recent Work Group effort. This report is one more component that will support Kentucky as we move to meet our goal that "all young children are healthy and safe, possess the foundation that will enable school and personal success, and live in strong families that are supported and strengthened within their communities."

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HISTORY

In January 2001, Governor Paul Patton supported the efforts of public, private, and community representatives in addressing early childhood transition by issuing an invitation to representatives of early childhood services around the state to an Early Childhood Transition Summit. A broad representation of stakeholders serving all children birth to age six gathered in March 2001 to begin the planning process. At the summit, major barriers to transition were identified and the need for planning confirmed. As a result of the Early Childhood Transition Summit, work groups were formed to oversee the development of recommendations for a statewide planning effort.

Kentucky has a long history of collaboration in planning for the transition of children in the early childhood years. Efforts of agency representatives and key staff from the Division of Mental Health/Mental Retardation, the Kentucky Department of Education, Head Start, Public Health, and Child Care resulted in a project dedicated solely to transition developed and implemented through a grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Through the leadership of that project, Kentucky implemented the Sequenced Transition to Education in the Public Schools (STEPS), a system change approach to transition for children with disabilities. Eventually, the project evolved into the Kentucky Early Childhood Transition Project (KECTP).

In late 2000, the transition process in Kentucky was re-evaluated by the KECTP and other stakeholders. Although there were model activities occurring in a number of communities, there were many communities that had not taken part in project activities and concerns were expressed that families in those areas were having difficulties in transition from early intervention services to preschool services. These concerns were later highlighted in a report of the Regulations & Investigations Committee of the Kentucky Legislature (Wilson, 2000), which followed a six month review of early intervention services. In early 2001, the concerns were further defined through a system-wide self-study of special education services required by the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The establishment of the KIDS NOW (Kentucky Invests in Developing Success NOW) initiative and the specific components of the initiative being implemented across the state, provided the opportunity to expand the focus of the planning to all children and families. This report is the culmination of these efforts and focus.

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